

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

Xplor

COOPED UP
INSIDE?

WE'VE GOT YOU
COVERED

CONTENTS

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

To us, the holidays are about waking up to the surprise of a snow day, sled rides and icy slides, stocking hat hair and wet mittens, sweet treats and potluck feasts, twinkling lights and gift-wrapped delights. But most of all, the holidays are about sharing time with people you love.

In that spirit, the *Xplor* team wanted to give you a special gift for the holidays: a board game to play with your family and friends. Instead of our regular lineup of stories, we packed the magazine from one cover to the other with playing cards and a game board.

We hope *Xplor — The Game!* brings you joy. And we hope that in between games and gifts and gatherings, you'll find time to get outside. Nature, itself, is a gift. And there's so much out there to *Xplor*.





Xplor

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We recycle.

**You can, too! Share
Xplor with friends.**

ON THE COVER

Raccoon

© 2016 CAROL BREAUT/SHUTTERSTOCK



Xplor

THE GAME!

A RACE TO SURVIVE

SETUP

- 1 Remove the staples from the center of the magazine.
- 2 Cut out the Critter Cards, Survival Cards, Action Cards, and instruction sheet.
- 3 Make the game pieces by following the steps on the inside back cover.
- 4 Gather two dice. If you don't have dice, you can use 12 coins. To "roll" the coins, gently toss them and then count the number of heads to determine how many spaces to move.
- 5 Store the cards, game pieces, and instructions in a zip-top bag so you don't lose them.
- 6 Grab a grown-up to help you learn how to play. After you learn the rules, *Xplor — The Game!* is easy!

Xplor

THE GAME!

A RACE TO SURVIVE

INSTRUCTIONS

2 to 6 players

10 minutes to 4 hours

HOW TO WIN

It's a race to survive! Be the first to gather your critter's four Survival Cards AND return to your home habitat.

CRITTER CARDS

Before game play begins, each player chooses one Critter Card (there are six in total). Your Critter Card shows:

- ▶ Which animal you are.
- ▶ The home habitat where you live.
- ▶ The Survival Cards (water, food, mate, and nest) you must collect to win the game.



SURVIVAL CARDS

Every animal needs water to drink, food to eat, a mate, and a nest where its babies can grow. To win the game, you must collect a Survival Card from each of these four categories:

- ▶ **WATER CARD** You must collect one water card. All of the water cards look alike, so they can *all* be used by *any* critter.
- ▶ **FOOD CARD** There are three foods listed on your Critter Card. You must collect *one* of those food cards.
- ▶ **MATE CARD** You must collect one of your critter's mate cards.
- ▶ **NEST CARD** You must collect one of your critter's nest cards.

TIP: Your food, mate, and nest Survival Cards will have a picture of your critter on them.



ACTION CARDS

Action Cards tell you what happens to your critter (and other critters) as you play the game. When you draw an Action Card, it must be played immediately unless it has a "Hold in Hand" symbol on it (see below). When you play an Action Card, read it out loud so everyone can hear.



Any Action Card with this symbol may be played as soon as you draw it, OR it may be kept in your hand until you want to play or discard it.

TIP: Some Action Cards apply only to the player that drew the card. Other Action Cards involve several players. Read carefully what's written on the card!

PREPARE TO PLAY

- 1 Each player chooses a Critter Card and its matching game piece. Look on your Critter Card to find your home habitat. Start the game with your game piece in your home habitat.
- 2 Separate the Survival Cards from the Action Cards. Mix up the Survival Cards and deal five to each player.
- 3 Combine the remaining Survival Cards with the Action Cards, place all of them face down, and mix them up.
- 4 Deal the mixed-up cards one at a time around the board in face-down piles beside each habitat. When you're done, you should have six piles of cards, one pile beside each habitat.

TIP: You're allowed to look at the cards that are dealt to you. If you already hold some of your critter's Survival Cards, great! Now work to collect the rest.



TIP: For a faster game, remove the food, mate, and nest Survival Cards for critters that aren't playing.

MOVING AROUND THE BOARD

- ▶ Decide who goes first. The first player rolls the dice and moves that many spaces. The player to the left goes next.
- ▶ Only one player can occupy a space on the board. You can jump over occupied spaces, but you can't stop there.
- ▶ If you land on the **LEAP** space, you may jump to the other **LEAP** space. From there, you may move any additional spaces left in your turn. (See the example on the game board above.)
- ▶ You don't need to roll the exact number of spaces to enter a habitat.
- ▶ More than one player can be in the same habitat.
- ▶ You may not enter the same habitat twice in a row.

ENTERING A HABITAT

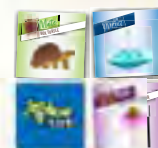
Each time you enter a habitat — even if it's the result of another player's Action Card — you must do the following:

- ▶ If you want to play an Action Card from your hand, play it first. **THEN ...**
- ▶ Draw the top card from the habitat's face-down pile, **OR ...**
- ▶ Collect one of the habitat's face-up Survival Cards (if there are any).

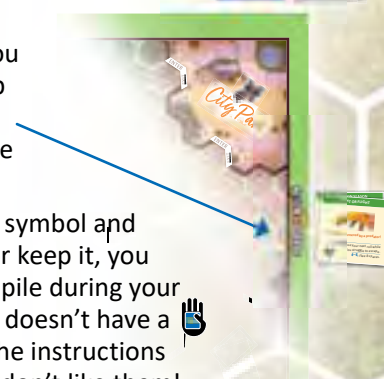
ABOUT THOSE CARDS ...



You may keep only FIVE cards in your hand. At the end of your turn, discard so you have only five cards.

- ▶ **When you discard a Survival Card,** place it face up beside the habitat where you are. Do not stack them. Other players may collect these Survival Cards when they get to that habitat.



- ▶ **Action Cards can be played only once.** After you play one, discard it face up in one of the "dead" piles located at either end of the game board.



- ▶ If an Action Card has a  symbol and you don't want to play it or keep it, you may discard it in the dead pile during your turn. But if an Action Card doesn't have a  symbol, you must follow the instructions on the card — even if you don't like them!

TIP: Pay attention to Survival Cards that other players discard. You might need them to win the game!



Cut cards along black lines.





MONARCH

HOME
HABITAT

Prairie

COLLECT ONE OF EACH

Water



Food

Purple Coneflower, Prairie
Blazing Star, or

Showy Goldenrod

Mate



Another Monarch

Nest



Common Milkweed



BOX TURTLE

HOME
HABITAT

Forest

COLLECT ONE OF EACH

Water



Food

Morels, Earthworm,
or Blackberries

Mate



Another Box Turtle

Nest



Loose Soil in the Woods



RACCOON

HOME
HABITAT

City Park

COLLECT ONE OF EACH

Water



Food

Robin Eggs, Persimmons,
or Pizza

Mate



Another Raccoon

Nest



Tree Cavity



GREAT BLUE HERON

HOME
HABITAT

Wetland

COLLECT ONE OF EACH

Water



Food

Catfish, Green Sunfish,
or Northern Watersnake

Mate



Another Great Blue Heron

Nest



Rookery in a Sycamore



BULLFROG

HOME
HABITAT

Stream

COLLECT ONE OF EACH

Water



Food

Dragonfly, Water Strider,
or Crayfish

Mate

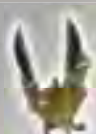


Another Bullfrog

Nest



Calm Pool in a Stream



BIG BROWN BAT

HOME
HABITAT

Cave

COLLECT ONE OF EACH

Water



Food

Straight-Lined Tiger Moth,
Mosquito, or May Beetle

Mate



Another Big Brown Bat

Nest



Cave

✂ Cut cards along white lines.

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RACCOON



WHERE Raccoons prefer wooded habitats near water. They also live in cities and towns. They make dens in hollow trees, abandoned woodchuck burrows, and unused buildings.

WHEN Missouri's masked bandits are active all year, but often hole up in dens during cold spells. Raccoons are nocturnal (active at night).

MENU Raccoons eat anything they can get their agile little paws on, including small animals, insects, eggs, fruits, and corn. They can be a nuisance if they scatter trash from bins while looking for food.



A raccoon's paw has more nerve endings than a human's hand. Raccoons use their sensitive digits to feel for food in murky water, unzip backpacks, and open trash can lids.

FAMILY FACTS

Mama raccoons give birth to three or four babies in April or May. Mom spends the summer teaching her kits how to climb trees, find food, and escape from predators. By fall, most kits are smart enough to fend for themselves, but they usually stay with mom until spring.

BULLFROG



WHERE Bullfrogs are found in marshes, ponds, and streams throughout Missouri.

WHEN Bullfrogs are active from mid-March through October. In winter, they burrow into mud at the bottom of a stream or pond. Bullfrogs rest during the day and search for food and mates at night.

MENU A hungry bullfrog will eat nearly any critter it can cram inside its cavernous mouth, including insects, crayfish, fish, small snakes, other frogs, birds, and rodents.

FAMILY FACTS

In June and July, mama bullfrogs lay a jelly-like glob of over 10,000 tiny eggs that float on the water's surface. In about five days, the eggs hatch into chubby tadpoles. The tadpoles eat algae and grow quickly. About a year later, they grow legs and turn into air-breathing adults.



When startled, young bullfrogs yelp as they hop to safety. To attract a mate, adult males make calls that sound like loud, rumbling burps. The love burps can be heard half a mile away.

BIG BROWN BAT



WHERE Missouri has over a dozen kinds of bats. Big browns are found statewide in hollow trees, chimneys, and caves.

WHEN Many bats hibernate during winter. Others migrate south to escape the cold. When insects return in spring, so do bats. Bats are nocturnal (active at night).

MENU Bats eat insects like beetles, flies, and moths. They use their wings like catcher's mitts to bag bugs in midair.

FAMILY FACTS

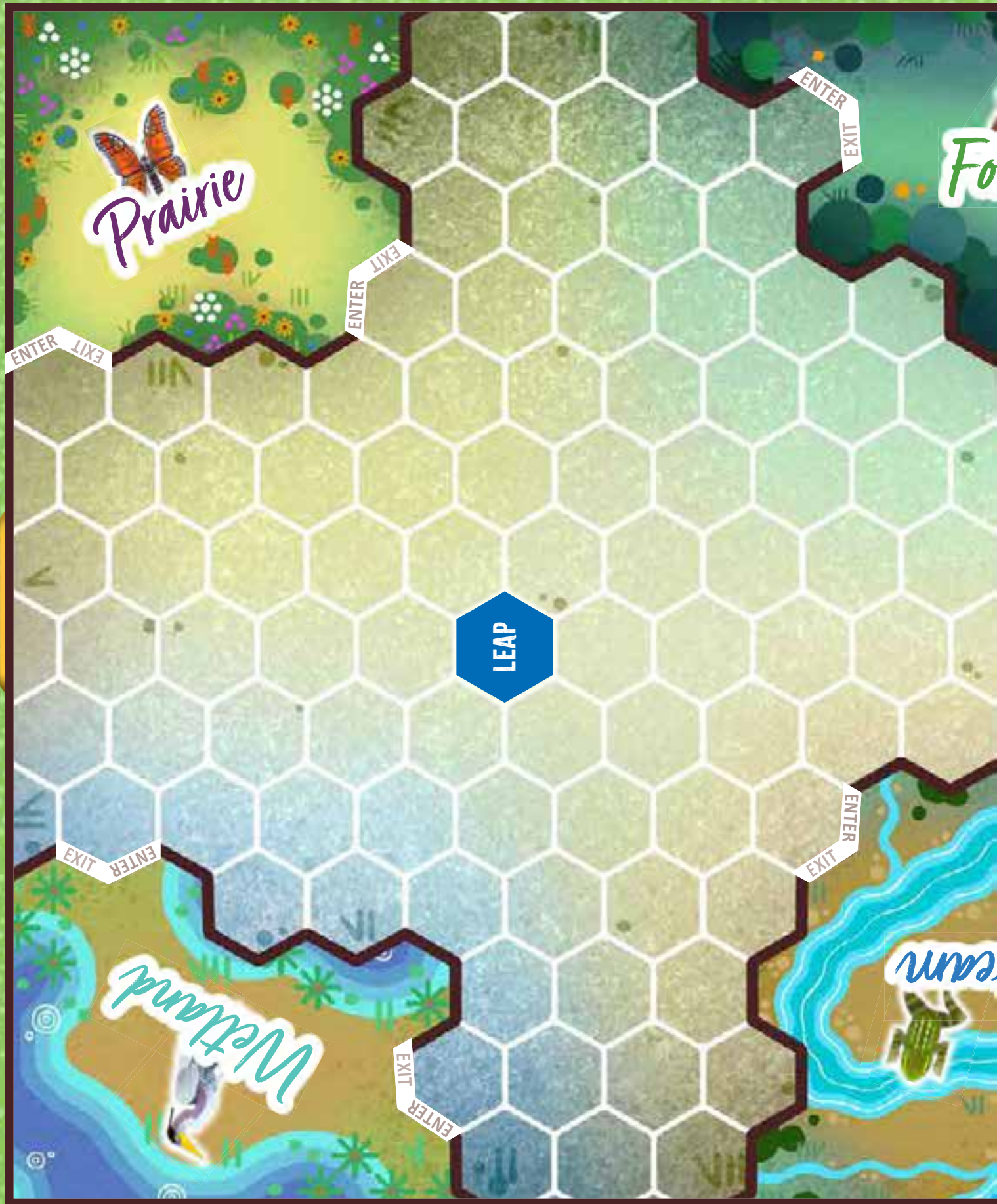
In June, mama big brown bats give birth to one (rarely two) babies. Newborn pups are blind, hairless, and helpless. Moms feed their pups milk, and the little squeakers grow quickly. In about a month, pups are able to fly and catch bugs on their own.



To navigate at night, bats "see" with sound. A bat emits high-pitched squeaks that echo off objects. By listening to the echoes, a bat forms a picture in its bat brain of its surroundings.



ACTION DISCARDS





ACTION DISCARDS

Critter Profiles

BOX TURTLE



WHERE Two species of box turtles crawl across Missouri. Eastern box turtles (sometimes called “three-toed box turtles”) live in forests. Ornate box turtles prefer prairies.

WHEN Box turtles are active from April through October. In the fall, they dig a shallow hole and sleep through the winter.

MENU Insects make up a large part of a box turtle’s diet. They also eat earthworms, snails, berries, and mushrooms.

FAMILY FACTS

In May and June, mama box turtles dig a shallow nest in loose soil and lay two to eight eggs inside. Mom carefully covers the eggs with soil, and then she leaves. About three months later, baby turtles emerge from the dirt. Warmer nests usually produce girl turtles. Cooler nests usually produce boys.



A box turtle has a hinge on its lower shell that lets it pull in its head and legs, and close the shell tight. Box turtles are the only turtles in Missouri that can seal themselves up like a box.

MONARCH



WHERE Monarchs flutter across prairies, parks, and wetlands. If you find milkweed, a leafy plant with sticky white sap, you’ll likely find monarchs.

WHEN Look for monarchs from May through September. In the fall, they fly thousands of miles south to spend winter in Mexico.

MENU As caterpillars, monarchs eat nothing but milkweed. Once they turn into butterflies, they sip nectar from a variety of flowers.

FAMILY FACTS

Mama monarchs lay hundreds of tiny eggs on milkweed leaves. In about four days, comma-sized caterpillars hatch out. The caterpillars eat and eat, and get bigger and bigger. In about two weeks, they form jewel-green chrysalises. Two weeks after that, striking orange-and-black butterflies emerge.



Milkweed is poisonous. Eating it doesn’t harm monarch caterpillars, but the more they munch, the more toxic they turn. As butterflies, they’re so poisonous, if a bird eats one, the bird often throws up.

GREAT BLUE HERON



WHERE Great blue herons are found wading through marshes, slow rivers, and the edges of lakes.

WHEN Herons are common from spring through fall. Most fly south for winter, but a few stay in Missouri in areas where water remains unfrozen.

MENU Fish form the bulk of a heron’s diet, but herons will eat nearly any small aquatic animal, including frogs, crayfish, small snakes, and rodents.

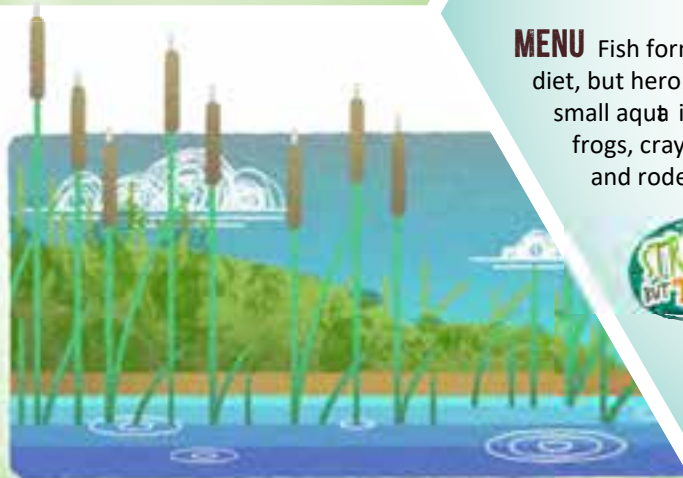
FAMILY FACTS

Mom and pop heron build a nest near other herons. A nesting neighborhood, called a rookery, can contain hundreds of nests. Mama herons lay 3 to 6 eggs, and both parents sit on the eggs and care for the young once they hatch (it takes about 27 days).



When a hungry heron spies a fish ... *Splash!* It jabs its spear-like beak into the water.

Though catching dinner is easy, swallowing it can be a pain in the neck. Herons have been known to choke to death when they gulp fish that are too big for their skinny throats.



✂ Cut cards along white lines.

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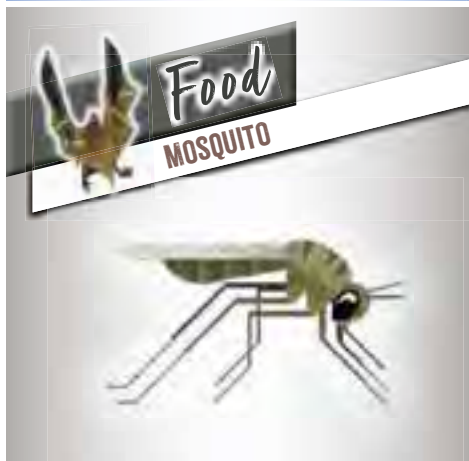
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Water



Water



Water



LIFE IS GOOD!



Resources are abundant and everything is going your way.

Draw 1 extra card (face up or face down) from any habitat.

MATING SEASON



Look through 1 face-down pile in any habitat for your mate card and keep it if you find it.

CONGRATS! YOU'RE A PARENT!



Raccoons, herons, and bats need extra resources to care for their babies.

All three critters each pick 1 face-down pile in any habitat to look through. Each may keep 1 food or water card if they find it. If you're not one of these critters, discard. Your turn has ended.

CONGRATS! YOU'RE A PARENT!



Monarchs, turtles, and frogs lay eggs and leave them to hatch on their own.

All three critters move to any habitat. If you're not one of these critters, discard. Your turn has ended.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT



You've been cornered by a predator!



ROLL 1 DICE.

1-3: Lose your next roll while you struggle to escape.
4-6: Flee 8 spaces.

STRANGER DANGER



A human approaches!



ROLL 1 DICE.

1-3: Freeze so they won't see you. Lose your next roll.
4-6: Flee 8 spaces.

PAIN IN THE FOOD CHAIN



ROLL 1 DICE.

1-2: If you have a food card, give it to another player.
3-4: Collect 1 face-up food card from any habitat.
5-6: Look through 1 face-down pile in any habitat for a food card and keep it if you find it.

NEST FEST



ROLL 1 DICE.

1-2: If you have a nest card, give it to another player.
3-4: Collect 1 face-up nest card from any habitat.
5-6: Look through 1 face-down pile in any habitat for a nest card and keep it if you find it.

DESPERATE FOR A DRINK



Non-native plants have choked off your water source. Until the Conservation Department cleans it up, you'll go thirsty.

Discard 1 water card (if you have one) in your current habitat.

✂ Cut cards along white lines.

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A BLIZZARD BLOWS IN!



Critters must take shelter and burn extra energy to survive.

Every player must discard 1 food card (if they have one) face up in their home habitat.

MIGRATION SEASON



The monarch and heron must fly south.

Both lose their next roll. If you're not one of these critters, discard. Your turn has ended.

HIBERNATION SEASON



The bat, turtle, and frog are sound asleep.

All three critters lose their next roll. If you're not one of these critters, discard. Your turn has ended.

WILDFIRE!



An out-of-control blaze forces you to flee.

Go directly to your home habitat.

HONK! BEEP! HONK!



Close call! You nearly became roadkill crossing a highway.

Lose your next roll to catch your breath.

NIGHT FALLS



Raccoons, frogs, and bats are active at night (nocturnal).

All three critters move 5 additional spaces. If you're not one of these critters, discard. Your turn has ended.

DAY BREAKS



Monarchs, turtles, and herons are active during the day (diurnal).

All three critters move 5 additional spaces. If you're not one of these critters, discard. Your turn has ended.

STRONG WINDS!



All flying critters are affected.

The bat, monarch, and heron must immediately fly 5 spaces.

SPRING FLOOD!



All swimming critters are affected.

The frog, raccoon, and turtle must immediately swim 5 spaces.

RELOCATED BY RESEARCH



You've been captured, tagged, and released by a biologist for a scientific study.

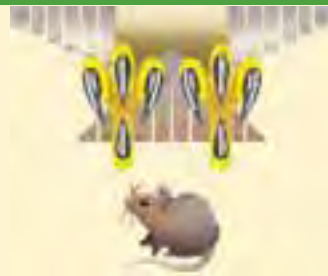
Move 6 additional spaces.

NATURE'S NOT FAIR!



Everyone must pass all of their cards to the player on their left.

NATURE'S NOT FAIR!



Trade all of your cards with a player of your choice.

✂ Cut cards along white lines.

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NATURE'S NOT FAIR!



Without looking, take 1 card from another player's hand.

NATURE'S NOT FAIR!



Pick another player. Show each other your cards. You each must take 1 card from the other player.

NOPE!



Block any action card immediately, including one you just drew. You may even NOPE! a NOPE! card.

This card may be played at ANY time, not just during your turn.

NOPE!



Block any action card immediately, including one you just drew. You may even NOPE! a NOPE! card.

This card may be played at ANY time, not just during your turn.

NOPE!



Block any action card immediately, including one you just drew. You may even NOPE! a NOPE! card.

This card may be played at ANY time, not just during your turn.

NOPE!



Block any action card immediately, including one you just drew. You may even NOPE! a NOPE! card.

This card may be played at ANY time, not just during your turn.

ZOOM TO THE BLOOMS



Go directly to the **PRAIRIE** habitat.

WANDER TO THE WOODS



Go directly to the **FOREST** habitat.

PARK IT, BUDDY!



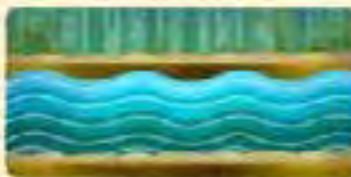
Go directly to the **CITY PARK** habitat.

TROMP TO THE SWAMP



Go directly to the **WETLAND** habitat.

CAREEN TO THE STREAM



Go directly to the **STREAM** habitat.

EMBARK TO THE DARK

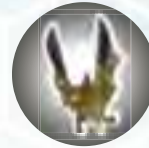


Go directly to the **CAVE** habitat.

GAME PIECES

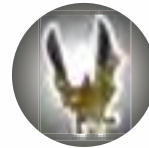
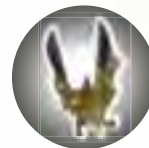
To prepare a set of game pieces:

- ▶ Carefully cut out each of the six critter circles.
- ▶ Use a small piece of tape to create a sticky loop. Attach it to a penny, then attach the critter cutout.
- ▶ Repeat for each of the critter cutouts.



Spare Pieces

Below are two sets of spare critter pieces (in case you lose some).



COMING SOON...

We're already hard at work on the January/February 2025 issue of *Xplor*. When it drops in mailboxes soon after New Year's, you'll find all our regular departments and fun features, including:

- ▶ A peek into the life of a sleepy groundhog.
- ▶ A winter treasure map (how many "jewels" of nature can you find?).
- ▶ A puzzle where only the sharpest eyes will be able to find all the hidden critters.
- ▶ And a guide to catching a glimpse of America's national symbol, the bald eagle.



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mdc.mo.gov/xplor.

FREE TO MISSOURI HOUSEHOLDS

**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS!**



May your mittens stay dry, your toes stay toasty, and your hiking trails lead you to the most breathtaking views. To find a nearby trail to hike, visit mdc.mo.gov/atlas. See you in 2025.

SNOWY TRAIL

